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# Quotes about Photography

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I have often thought that if photography were difficult in the true sense of the term -- meaning that the creation of a simple photograph would entail as much time and effort as the production of a good watercolor or etching -- there would be a vast improvement in total output. The sheer ease with which we can produce a superficial image often leads to creative disaster.

- Adams, Ansel

A photograph is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you the less you know.

- Arbus, Diane

If I were just curious, it would be very hard to say to someone, I want to come to your house and have you talk to me and tell me the story of your life. I mean people are going to say, You're crazy. Plus they're going to keep mighty guarded. But the camera is a kind of license. A lot of people, they want to be paid that much attention and that's a reasonable kind of attention to be paid.

- Arbus, Diane

The virtue of the camera is not the power it has to transform the photographer into an artist, but the impulse it gives him to keep on looking.

- Atkinson, Brooks

It takes a lot of imagination to be a good photographer. You need less imagination to be a painter, because you can invent things. But in photography everything is so ordinary; it takes a lot of looking before you learn to see the ordinary.

- Bailey, David

The photographic image... is a message without a code.

- Barthes, Roland

If photography is allowed to stand in for art in some of its functions it will soon supplant or corrupt it completely thanks to the natural support it will find in the stupidity of the multitude. It must return to its real task, which is to be the servant of the sciences and the arts, but the very humble servant, like printing and shorthand which have neither created nor supplanted literature.

- Baudelaire, Charles

Too many photographers try too hard. They try to lift photography into the realm of Art, because they have an inferiority complex about their Craft. You and I would see more interesting photography if they would stop worrying, and instead, apply horse-sense to the problem of recording the look and feel of their own era.

- Beals, Jessie Tarbox

The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.

- Benjamin, Walter

Most things in life are moments of pleasure and a lifetime of embarrassment; photography is a moment of embarrassment and a lifetime of pleasure.

- Benn, Tony

Unlike any other visual image, a photograph is not a rendering, an imitation or an interpretation of its subject, but actually a trace of it. No painting or drawing, however naturalist, belongs to its subject in the way that a photograph does.

- Berger, John

The camera relieves us of the burden of memory. It surveys us like God, and it surveys for us. Yet no other god has been so cynical, for the camera records in order to forget.

- Berger, John

All photographs are there to remind us of what we forget. In this -- as in other ways -- they are the opposite of paintings. Paintings record what the painter remembers. Because each one of us forgets different things, a photo more than a painting may change its meaning according to who is looking at it.

- Berger, John

The camera can photograph thought. It's better than a paragraph of sweet polemic.

- Bogarde, Dirk

The most refined skills of color printing, the intricate techniques of wide-angle photography, provide us pictures of trivia bigger and more real than life. We forget that we see trivia and notice only that the reproduction is so good. Man fulfils his dream and by photographic magic produces a precise image of the Grand Canyon. The result is not that he adores nature or beauty the more. Instead he adores his camera -- and himself.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

At least the box is full of something useful. 'On his photo gracing a box of Raisin Bran';

- Brooks, Avery

It is not merely the likeness which is precious... but the association and the sense of nearness involved in the thing... the fact of the very shadow of the person lying there fixed forever! It is the very sanctification of portraits I think -- and it is not at all monstrous in me to say that I would rather have such a memorial of one I dearly loved, than the noblest Artist's work ever produced.

- Browning, Elizabeth Barrett

Blessed be the inventor of photography! I set him above even the inventor of chloroform! It has given more positive pleasure to poor suffering humanity than anything else that has cast up in my time or is like to -- this art by which even the poor can possess themselves of tolerable likenesses of their absent dear ones. And mustn't it be acting favorably on the morality of the country?

- Carlyle, Jane Welsh

The camera is a killing chamber, which speeds up the time it claims to be conserving. Like coffins exhumed and prised open, the photographs put on show what we were and what we will be again.

- Conrad, Peter

A hundredth of a second here, a hundredth of a second there -- even if you put them end to end, they still only add up to one, two, perhaps three seconds, snatched from eternity.

- Doisneau, Robert

The camera has an interest in turning history into spectacle, but none in reversing the process. At best, the picture leaves a vague blur in the observer's mind; strong enough to send him into battle perhaps, but not to have him understand why he is going.

- Donoghue, Denis

The magic of photography is metaphysical. What you see in the photograph isn't what you saw at the time. The real skill of photography is organized visual lying.

- Donovan, Terence

Objects in pictures should so be arranged as by their very position to tell their own story.

- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang Von

The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera.

- Lange, Dorothea

Photographers never have much incentive to show the world as it is.

- Leith, William

Any one who knows what the worth of family affection is among the lower classes, and who has seen the array of little portraits stuck over a laborer's fireplace will perhaps feel with me that in counteracting the tendencies, social and industrial, which every day are sapping the healthier family affections, the sixpenny photograph is doing more for the poor than all the philanthropists in the world.

- Magazine, Macmillan

Giving a camera to Diane Arbus is like putting a live grenade in the hands of a child.

- Mailer, Norman

If you scratch a great photograph, you find two things; a painting and a photograph.

- Malcolm, Janet

I have no fear of photography as long as it cannot be used in heaven and in hell.

- Munch, Edvard

Sometimes you can tell a large story with a tiny subject.

- Porter, Eliot

I paint what cannot be photographed, that which comes from the imagination or from dreams, or from an unconscious drive. I photograph the things that I do not wish to paint, the things which already have an existence.

- Ray, Man

No good is ever done to society by the pictorial representation of its diseases.

- Ruskin, John

That the outer man is a picture of the inner, and the face an expression and revelation of the whole character, is a presumption likely enough in itself, and therefore a safe one to go on; borne out as it is by the fact that people are always anxious to see anyone who has made himself famous. Photography offers the most complete satisfaction of our curiosity.

- Schopenhauer, Arthur

The camera can represent flesh so superbly that, if I dared, I would never photograph a figure without asking that figure to take its clothes off.

- Shaw, George Bernard

The painter constructs, the photographer discloses.

- Sontag, Susan

It is not altogether wrong to say that there is no such thing as a bad photograph -- only less interesting, less relevant, less mysterious ones.

- Sontag, Susan

In America, the photographer is not simply the person who records the past, but the one who invents it.

- Sontag, Susan

Most modern reproducers of life, even including the camera, really repudiate it. We gulp down evil, choke at good.

- Stevens, Wallace

Photography suits the temper of this age -- of active bodies and minds. It is a perfect medium for one whose mind is teeming with ideas, imagery, for a prolific worker who would be slowed down by painting or sculpting, for one who sees quickly and acts decisively, accurately.

- Weston, Edward

We regard the photograph, the picture on our wall, as the object itself (the man, landscape, and so on) depicted there. This need not have been so. We could easily imagine people who did not have this relation to such pictures. Who, for example, would be repelled by photographs, because a face without color and even perhaps a face in reduced proportions struck them as inhuman.

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig







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